

Greetings,

We are writing this letter because we feel that we should at least inform those who are worried about us, our friends and families, that we are alive and well. We are also aware that you expect an explanation, and you are right. So we will do our best to tell you why we disappeared so suddenly.

Our generation was not traumatized. We did not fight in a war. We were born in the aftermath of the September 12 military coup. The great traumas of our time were localized. The wounds left by natural disasters and by conflicts between the military and guerillas were confined to specific regions. Most of the young people who studied at what are regarded as the oldest, most time-honored and best schools in the nation's three largest cities were not scarred by these wounds. Although these traumas were written of *ad nauseum*, our generation does not share any collective wounds.

In addition, few of us experienced personal trauma. We were not abused as children, our families were not murdered in front of us by serial killers, we did not need ration cards to buy bread. We did not have hard lives. We never went to bed hungry, we never had to scramble for faucets at public baths, we never had to carry buckets from the well, we didn't have to work in the fields in summer. Partly it was because we were born lucky, and partly because our families protected us. We lived in safe homes, we had hot water, and if we did work in the fields it was for fun. There are thousands of us who did not have to face these kinds of hardships. Although we recognize that we do not constitute a significant percentage of this country's population, we see that our disappearance cannot be ignored.

Interestingly, we refused to grow up. We lived with our parents, we got spending money from them, we called them all the time. We didn't think about moving to another city, finding a job, getting married, starting our own families. We didn't try to start our own families because we were still children. We played games with our friends and were socialized through those games. We did not want to shoulder the basic responsibilities of adulthood.

This childishness was not something lasting. Let me put it this way: We were born into capitalism. This was all we knew. We learned to consume. We were only able to criticize and reject this when we gained consciousness. Most of us did not want to be part of the system. We studied and graduated so that we could get prestigious jobs, but we dreamed of opening a bar. We felt the need to reject some of the responsibility we had been given. Childhood ended, we became aware of certain things and then childhood began anew. Then we asked ourselves whether we could reject all of these responsibilities and take on responsibilities of our own choosing. How far outside the system could we live if we suddenly left behind everything we had and started over

somewhere else with no qualifications? Or, if we managed to live outside the system, could we become adults?

Clothing, diplomas, computers; we had all of these. There's no doubt that we seemed happy. It's not as if we were sadly watching our miserable lives being swept away. But everyone looked back on their childhood with nostalgia, as if it was fifty years in the past. "To be a child at the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s." That was when the private sector developed in Turkey, when the capitalist system became deeply rooted and a frenzy of consumption began, a period decorated with economic crises and decisions. It was a time, in the aftermath of the military coup, when people were afraid to think about, read or discuss anything. But we didn't have a clue about any of this. We ate junk food and watched cartoons on TV. All we had to worry about was whether our class would win tomorrow's dodge ball game, whether our babysitter would turn on *The Young and the Restless* soon, whether we would have leeks for dinner. We wanted to go back to that time. We wanted to remain in a moment of carefree, clueless happiness amidst all of that chaos (which was in fact a tranquil chaos).

To those who call us apolitical, we say there's a reason for this. We might have been able to grow up together if we'd had a shared trauma or a shared hope, that is, if we'd had a common dream we could have worked towards together. Unfortunately, we've never been able to feel unified. Since we're not unified in any event and since we can't change this under the present circumstances, we decided to remove ourselves from these circumstances, leave everything behind, scatter to different places as new people, take on different responsibilities and perhaps grow up. This, in fact, is why we did what we did. We hope this is a satisfactory explanation. But perhaps we should make things clearer.

If we were unhappy with where we were living we could have moved. If our friends had mistreated us we could have made new friends. If we were dissatisfied with our jobs we could have tried something else. If our belongings had brought us unpleasant memories we could have bought new things. But these things weren't the problem. We might have been living in a very beautiful city. Our friends might have loved us and we might have had good times together. We might have had the most satisfying job in the world. We might have been very happy with our belongings and they might have brought us the best of memories. But these things were not the problem. It might have to do with our being spoiled. We may be well-educated children of the twenty-first century, from good families that can get almost anything they want when they want it. We may never have had to truly worry about our survival. We may never have been prevented from expressing ourselves, and in the small group of those like us everyone was good at something and we experienced a free life.

Like *Smurf Village*. Perhaps this is our problem. But whatever the problem is, it's beside the point.

We enjoyed life. Morning walks, listening to music, reading a good book, eating moist cake. And we could have these things whenever we wanted. But there were still things that we wished were different. This was not dissatisfaction. This was not asking for more. This was not greed.

We might have chosen to try to change our lives gradually, with small steps. We could have taken a pottery class, we could have learned to play the saxophone, we could have searched for true love. Maybe these could have made us "better people" (I'm making reference to a cliché people never tire of hearing in movies or from friends or reading in books for the past twenty years). These things could have made us feel good. But, unfortunately, this was not our problem. We're not particularly bad people, and we don't particularly want to be good people. No matter how "good" we became it still wouldn't change the big picture.

All we want is to start life over again with our own decisions. Not because this life is bad. It certainly isn't. Perhaps we could put it this way: Say we're in a marriage that's not working out and there's nothing we can do to make it work out. Every time we see each other our love diminishes a bit more. We don't want to be together, and when we are we change each other. Perhaps we should separate quietly and in a civilized manner before we get into loud arguments, before we hurt each other, not out of selfishness but out of mutual respect. Then those we left could stay the same in the eyes of those who remained behind. Sometimes if we're in an unhappy relationship with ourselves we might have to divorce ourselves.

Separation is always bitter. As in all divorces, we have to make sacrifices when we divorce ourselves as well. But more so in this case than in others. We can't even discuss who gets custody of the children. We relinquish custody of the children, of the parents, of the friends. We leave behind the house, the car, the bank accounts. Because this is the only possible way. We want to believe that it's possible to make a new start without having anything from the past. We want to believe it's possible to start over someplace where no one knows us and without the education and the degrees that cost so much money, without the pounds of clothing through which we expressed ourselves, without the furniture we bought in flat boxes and assembled ourselves, without our marvelously designed computers. Therefore we did not disappear out of fear or out of a desire to flee.

We regret that with all of the problems the world is facing we have dwelt on the unhappiness of a few thousand healthy, well-educated people from a country in the Middle East.